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ABSTRACT

A 1983 interview with Werner F. Leopold (1896-1984), a key figure in the study of bilingualism and child language, is presented. An introductory section gives some background to the interview. The discussion itself reviews Leopold's personal and professional background, work, and writing, and focuses largely on the linguistic development of Leopold's daughter, on which much of his work was based. Mrs. Marguerite Leopold, Warner Leopold's wife, who was present at the interview, contributed several comments. (MSE)

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BRG #89-07

Working Paper

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An Interview with Werner F. Leopold

Kenji Hakuta

Introduction

This interview of Werner Leopold (1896-1984), which I conducted in the spring of 1983 as part of the research for my book *Mirror of Language*, is offered as a historical document on one of the key figures in the study of child language and bilingualism. Leopold's classic 4-volume work based on diaries of his daughter Hildegard (published successively in 1939, 1947, and the last two volumes in 1949), titled *Speech Development of a Bilingual Child*, is known to all students of developmental psycholinguistics and stands as a paragon of scholarship in this area. I hope that this record will serve as a piece of general interest to anyone interested in the history of linguistics and the study of child language.

Background of Interview

On February 28, 1983, I wrote a letter to Professor Werner Leopold, who was then residing in Lacey, Washington, to request an interview with him. His address was obtained through Professor Evelyn Hatch of the English Department at the University of California at Los Angeles, who had become a close acquaintance of Professor Leopold while he was living in the Los Angeles area. In the letter, I wrote:

I have long been an admirer of your work in child language. I am currently in the process of writing a book on the psychology and sociology of bilingualism (to be published by Basic Books). In one of the chapters, I would like to use your seminal work on Hildegard as the centerpiece, where I would use it both to lay out the basic issues in childhood "simultaneous" bilingualism, and to sketch a history of the interaction between linguists and psychologists over the years. What I would very much like to do is to meet you and talk about your work, and especially to obtain from you your impressions of changes that have taken place in linguistics and psychology over the years since your work first appeared.

Professor Leopold promptly responded, on March 4, with the following note:

Dear Professor Hakuta,

Your letter was a joy. It is good to see that my work is still useful. Sometimes I get the impression that child language research has by-passed my contribution. I pride myself in having opened up the field as a legitimate concern of linguistics. In fact I gave currency to the term "child language", which was not used before me and is now ubiquitous. The Library of Congress, for one, still does not use it, but "children's language or speech".

I should like to meet you, but I cannot travel any more. I am handicapped by rheumatoid arthritis, which ties me to a walker. You are welcome here, but I cannot accommodate you in our two-room

apartment in a retirement home. There are motels nearby.

I am not sure that you would profit from a conversation with me. I am not happy with the direction the research has taken (in linguistics). You are welcome to use my work in one of your chapters. I hope I get to see it when it is published.

Excuse the handwriting. My hand is somewhat crippled.

Let me know when you come, if you do.

Sincerely,

W F Leopold

The Interview

Lacey, Washington, April 28, 1983

[The Leopolds live in an apartment building within a pleasant retirement community called Panorama City. As Hakuta exits from the elevator on the floor of the Leopolds' apartment, he is greeted by Mrs. Marguerite Leopold, who informs him that "Professor Leopold has been looking forward to your visit very much," and guides him to the apartment. Leopold is seated in an armchair, and greets Hakuta, "Mr. Hakuta. It is a pleasure to meet you." After an exchange of pleasantries and small talk, Hakuta presents Leopold with a plaque on which is written "Professor Werner Leopold, With Appreciation and Affection, Stanford Child Language Research Forum, 1983", signed by almost 100 participants who were at the conference. (Credit for the idea of presenting Professor Leopold with this plaque goes to Lois Bloom). Leopold is visibly moved, and throughout the interview looks through the names. He immediately notices the signatures of Joseph Greenberg, Eve Clark, and Charles Ferguson. He notes that Greenberg was a graduate student in anthropology at Northwestern, and that he was on Greenberg's dissertation committee. After some time, Hakuta requests permission to record the interview, which is granted.

[General context of conversation: Hakuta is giving his general background, as a psychologist.]

Hakuta: I'm a very....dilettante linguist. I admire linguistics very much as a field because it has a very strong theoretical orientation which psychology tends to lack. That was one of the things that you criticized about the psychological works that were done of language in your time.

Leopold: I didn't really criticize it. If you read the preface to my volumes, I give them admiration where the admiration is in place.

Hakuta: I think you're very fair in the kinds of cred that you give to the people who've done work in the various relevant areas. But I think that a lot of the psychological studies that were done in those days were very oriented towards counting, such as vocabulary counts where they might not make any linguistic sense.

Leopold: That's right. They didn't have the linguistic background. They had the layman's background.

Hakuta: And I think that's also true of the studies of bilinguals that you reviewed....

Leopold: That's your real interest, isn't it? Bilingualism.

Hakuta: Currently, it is. My dissertation actually was on syntax acquisition and the comparison between English and Japanese.

Leopold: Oh, yes. Where was that, at Yale?

Hakuta: It was at Harvard.

Leopold: At Harvard, not a bad place.

Hakuta: I studied with Roger Brown.

Leopold: Oh, you studied with Roger Brown. Well, that's a famous name. Is he a Chomsky follower?

Hakuta: Uh, no, he's not. Well, for a while, he wavered, like most psychologists did, in the sixties. And I think when people really started looking for Chomskyan kinds of phenomena in child language, there was a few years of excitement about it, and then it receded, because it really wasn't making much sense. It seemed to make a lot more sense trying to describe the child's language in its own right.

Leopold: I once heard Chomsky talk, someplace in Indiana or Illinois, and I admire him too. He's a highly intelligent fellow. There's something to him, but I'm a little disgruntled with what he has done to the field of child language study.

Hakuta: You mean because he removed the child from the scene?

Leopold: Well, maybe, yes. And if you have looked into my volumes, you know, the child is central throughout the study. Incidentally, in the article that you sent me a reprint of, you mentioned only the first volume of my work. Is that all you know?

Hakuta: No, I know all the volumes. I referred to that because that was the only volume that I had with me then, but I will include all of the volumes....

[General context of conversation: Hakuta brought with him all of the 4 volumes, and Leopold is pleased.]

Hakuta: In fact, I find the fourth volume to be quite interesting....

Leopold: That has called for least attention of the four volumes. I told Mrs. Hatch [referring to Professor Evelyn Hatch, English Department, UCLA] once, and it impressed her, that everybody who gets interested in my work likes one volume or the other, and not all of them. Volume One of course called the most attention because it was the first. But Volume Two has captivated many people although I thought that might be boring. It is to some, I'm sure, and it may not be to others. And the third volume. The fourth volume is....got least attention, although that deals with two children, both of my daughters, and takes them into the later years. But there have been aficionados too.

Hakuta: What I'm personally curious about is where a linguist in the 1930's

would find the motivation to study child language which was not considered, well, it's kind of a revolutionary thing to do.

Leopold: As I told you, the ants and the bees [laughs]. Those were my ants and bees. [Earlier, in an unrecorded part of the conversation, Leopold had said that he justified his detailed descriptive approach in studying child language by analogy to scientists who study in painstaking detail the behavior of ants and bees.]

Hakuta: This was as you moved to Northwestern....

Leopold: It was at that time, yes.

Hakuta: You were at Milwaukee....

Leopold: At Marquette University, for two years. I came from....I didn't come from Germany. I came from Central America. I immigrated from, through New Orleans. And, well, my interest was linguistics, very definitely, and what better topic could there be than studying your own children, how they learn? But not many people have thought so.

[Later on in an unrecorded portion of the interview, Hakuta asks whether he remembers the moment when he decided to invest his time in studying the language of his daughter. He says that he cannot, but Mrs. Leopold recalls that when she first brought the baby home, Leopold was immediately fascinated by the sounds that Hildegard was making, and that was when it started. "It fell into place," she said.]

Hakuta: What was your training in? For example, your dissertation, did that have anything to do with child language?

Leopold: My dissertation was on literature, English literature.

Hakuta: Do you remember the title of it?

Leopold: Yes. Do you know German?

Hakuta: No, I don't, unfortunately.

Leopold: I see. Well, the title is in German, of course. The title was "The religious root of Carlyle's literary activity." It was English literature branching out into theology, you might say, something quite different from what I did later on.

Hakuta: But in the course of this training you picked up phonetic analysis....

Leopold: That's right. In my four universities I had different courses. Phonetics was one field. But of course all the linguistic training at that time was historical linguistics. That was my approach. I worked in descriptive linguistics eventually, but that wasn't my starting point.

Hakuta: When you were in Costa Rica, was that a teaching job in linguistics?

Leopold: That was a secondary school teaching job. I was called to Costa Rica by a businessman in Costa Rica who was working in the field of imports, and he came from Hamburg. And Hamburg was the pretty city where I was brought up, and I went to school, and I kept in contact with my classroom teacher, we had one classroom teacher who was responsible

for the class for a number of years, I think I had him for six years, so he knew me very well and I knew him very well. And one day, after I came back from the university, and my doctor's degree, he called me to his office in the school and met me at the door, and asked me, "How would you like to go as a tutor to Central America?" My first idea was "Are you crazy?" I didn't know Spanish at that time.

Hakuta: You were in your twenties?

Leopold: I was in my middle twenties. But it was a time after the first world war when Germany was in poor financial conditions, and there was an endless waiting time for a job in secondary school. So thinking it over, I decided, "Why not make use of that time and learn something different?" And I entered into negotiations, of course the man had to pay my passage, and salary, and he was not going to do that just for a year, so I contracted for three years. And near the end of the third year, I decided "I can't stay here forever, this is not a field for life activity", much as I enjoyed it, and I was going to stop in the United States on the way back to Germany. And since I didn't want to spend my savings, I looked around for a job. And I got one soon, a Costa Rican who lived in Milwaukee as vice-consul of Costa Rica, a purely honorary job, really, he was a teacher at Marquette University for Spanish. So he got me in there, as a teacher of Spanish, I started teaching Spanish.

Hakuta: So you had picked up Spanish....

Leopold: I had begun to publish in Spanish, and one article of mine that I published in Costa Rica was reprinted in Argentina, so I was beginning to develop a reputation in Spanish [slight laugh].

Hakuta: Was this in literature?

Leopold: It was mostly pedagogical, teaching. No, I didn't enter deeply into Spanish literature but once I studied Spanish, I studied Spanish literature too, so I know quite a bit about that. But that went by the board eventually, they soon discovered that I knew German better than Spanish, so they used me for teaching German. And after one year I decided that wasn't enough to get acquainted with America, I accepted a job for a second year. At the end of two years, I got the offer from Northwestern, on the basis of phonetics. There was a teacher there, Hans Kurath, you probably don't know the name, he's well known in the German and linguistic fields, his home was in Milwaukee, and he came for visits from Northwestern and he had accepted a job at Ohio State University, and needed a successor. We talked about phonetics, I had had phonetics courses at Göttingen University, so he knew I knew something about phonetics and was interested, so he recommended me, and that led to the position at Northwestern, for a year, and that year stretched into something like thirty-seven years.

Hakuta: In your page and a half note at the beginning of your book, you mentioned that you were in

Williamstown, Massachusetts for a year....

Leopold: That was a substitute job for a man who left for a year, but it turned out to be a permanent separation. But my job was just for one year, and I enjoyed that, but it was teaching German, pure and simple.

Hakuta: At Northwestern, was there a linguistics department then?

Leopold: Nobody talked about linguistics at that time. People were still casting around for a suitable name for the field, and I was in the German Department, to the end of my teaching career. But my graduate courses were linguistic. Linguistics courses were attached to this department and that department, German or English or anthropology or psychology, all those fields participated in it. And much later, it became established by itself. I had my title at that time changed from 'Professor of German' to 'Professor of German and Linguistics'. That was the first approach to the field of linguistics at Northwestern.

Hakuta: Do you happen to know when the department of linguistics was first established at Northwestern?

Leopold: When? Well, I could look that up, but I don't remember the exact date. It was after half my teaching period. It must have been after twenty five years, maybe. I was already working in linguistics, but as a field of German at that time.

Hakuta: As you arrived in Northwestern, Hildegard was about six months then? How old was your daughter?

Leopold: I wasn't married yet. From Costa Rica to Milwaukee, 1925. From Milwaukee to Evanston, Illinois where Northwestern is located, 1927. And after the first year, I taught summer school too, and one of my students was....[points to his wife, Marguerite, who is sitting to his left]....this [laughs]. She was a teacher, already, but she took summer school courses, and she didn't want Spanish. She protested against Spanish. "What do I do with Spanish?" Well, she had entered a little late, and there was no room in any other course. So the dean pushed her into, willy nilly into my course, and she learned a little Spanish from me in six weeks. And, as we always like to tell people, I gave her a poor grade because she, it was a funny course, a whole semester's work in six weeks. And she was overworked. She had home duties and relative duties too, so she couldn't do good work, so I gave her a "D", and in revenge, she married me.

Hakuta: When you moved to Evanston, how much of a pressure was there to publish papers and do research?

Leopold: There was quite a bit. In fact, American universities were, graduate schools were largely in the wake of German graduate schools, and they followed the German system and the German ideals and the German methods and so on. Any self-respecting teacher of German had had some time of studying in Germany at that time. The chairman of my department at Northwestern had

studied in Germany, and another professor in the department....., it was the thing to do, if you could possibly manage it, you had a year in Germany. So, I was accepted with a good reputation for the field.

Hakuta: It didn't particularly matter that, I assume, anyway, that a lot of your time in those initial years were taken up keeping your diary?

Leopold: Well, in a sense, all the time. I might mention this detail in my experience. When my older daughter was a few years old and speaking in a mixture of German and English, German to me, once she asked suddenly "What are you always writing, Papa?" I always had slips of paper in my pocket and whenever I noticed something in the language that interested me, I took a note about it. So I answered, "Oh, I'm taking notes for my work." And that satisfied her. She knew I was always reading or writing. So....the anonymity was preserved.

Hakuta: Did your senior colleagues think that it was a strange thing for you to be doing? How was that received by your colleagues?

Leopold: Colleagues in the department? Well, I was one of the better professors in the department. They probably looked up to me and I don't know whether they even talked to other people about it. I just went ahead and did my job, did what I was interested in, and I didn't bother about anybody else. I got my position at Northwestern on the basis of phonetics, so that was linguistics in a sense.

[General context of conversation: Hakuta mentions that being interested in bilingualism in a traditional psychology department, even today, would be considered an eccentric activity]

Leopold: But you have a background for the field now in departments of English as a second language. They didn't exist in those days.

Hakuta: Well, I was thinking, people would think of you as an eccentric going out of the beaten path....

Leopold: Well, that's what I was afraid of, that people wouldn't appreciate the endeavor. I went ahead just the same because that was my interest. I got my position at Northwestern on the basis of phonetics and not linguistics, but I could work on anything I pleased. I had complete freedom. So I took the jump, took the chance, and it turned out better than I thought it would.

Hakuta: The courses you were teaching then were all in phonetics?

Leopold: No. I had one phonetics course, and being a linguist I knew that much, I think. I taught middle high German and old high German, and things like that, you see, so I did graduate work with graduate students in linguistics. But the foundation of my job was undergraduate teaching of German. I carried on my interest in German throughout life. If you look at my list of publications, I have one of course that I kept going, it's always mixtures of linguistic topics and German topics. Elementary texts, some of them are still in use.

Hakuta: Did you have any graduate students who became interested in child language that continued to pursue that?

Leopold: I wonder. I have never thought about that. Some of my graduate students became well known. Bloch, for instance, well, he was a young man in my graduate class, and he showed great interest and knowledge in the field of phonetics, and I recommended him to the Linguistic Atlas workers, and he got the job. That's where Bloch got his start. But that wasn't child language. I can't think of any of my students who worked in the field of child language. Probably after you leave I will remember some.

Hakuta: Well, they probably saw the volume of your notes and thought they wouldn't want to put in as much work. Before the publication of your book, did you announce this study at professional meetings?

Leopold: I went to Modern Language [Modern Language Association] meetings. The Linguistic Society [Linguistic Society of America] was founded in those years, 1925, I think, so it was quite young. The Linguistic Society was my real home, you might say.

Hakuta: When you reported on your study there, what was the response that you got of people?

Leopold: I trace it now to a meeting, the summer meeting, I think, at the University of Michigan, of the Linguistic Society, where I presented a paper of research in child language study, or something like that. And that developed into an article which really established the field, I think, an article in *Word,* you know that journal? [Hakuta shows Leopold the copy of that article, which he had brought, which pleases Leopold. Reference: "The study of child language and infant bilingualism." *Word,* 1948, *4* (1), 1- 17.]. That's it. And that article made a stir.

Hakuta: It was a very forcefully written article.

Leopold: After I presented the paper at the Linguistic Society meeting, a colleague of mine from another university came to me, Twadell, you wouldn't know the name probably, well, Twadell came to me after the paper and said, "I think you have put it across." I didn't quite know what he meant, but I began to realize that it had made an impression, and it was a big meeting, there were about a hundred people attending that lecture. And then it was published in *Word* a year or two later, it always takes time, you know, and I've never published an article that had so much of an echo as that article. I had one request after another for a reprint of the article, from all over. So, my venture was successful to call people's attention to the field. From that paper, I date the success of the field of child linguistics.

Hakuta: That's a great bit of history there, that you can pinpoint the specific time....

Leopold: It wasn't clear to me at that time. I was surprised that so many people wanted reprints, but, it couldn't be done this way as you do now

[referring to photocopying]. I had to have a certain number of reprints, and I distributed those as long as they lasted. So it became clear to me later on that that was the starting point. Then of course I went ahead in publishing the four volumes over the space of ten years.

Hakuta: What were the critics of your work like?

Leopold: I had a hard time getting it reviewed. I remember that *Language* didn't review it for years. The publisher must have sent copies to leading journals, probably a list that I gave them, and some reviewed them, and some never got around to it. At one meeting at Indiana University, I buttonholed a man who could be interested, that was....oh, somebody who belonged to UCLA in Los Angeles,....the name Hoijer comes to my mind, but I'm not sure that it was he, anyway, I finally persuaded him to ask for a copy and review it. And he reviewed it in detail, but not thoroughly complementarily. He had criticisms, too, I don't remember what his criticisms were. So, not every journal reviewed it.... Was it he, or was it Einar Haugen, who reported at some meeting about some of my work, and he said, "Now I'm anxious to meet Hildegard." Hildegard was my older daughter. People didn't realize by that time that Hildegard had grown up, she wasn't a little child any more. And that still happens. People write to me about Hildegard and visualize a two-year-old girl.

Hakuta: Is she living nearby here?

Leopold: Kansas. My second daughter lives on Mercer Island which is Seattle. .... The second daughter and her husband saw to it that we moved into this place.

[General conversation about the living arrangements].

Mrs. Leopold: Evelyn Hatch was very very sweet to us, and that whole department, and they would get Werner to come to their classes to talk to them.

Leopold: I had pretty good relations at UCLA. I knew a number of people there. I've never established any real relations with the University of Washington. I've met some people there, but no intimate connections.

Mrs. Leopold: Well, you taught at USC twice.

Leopold: I taught at USC, yes, twice over forty years. And that was my last teaching job, you know, after I retired from Northwestern, I had three visiting professorships at Nebraska, at Wisconsin [Madison] and USC. And USC was my last job. That brought me out here, then we moved to Santa Monica, and we lived there for ten years. By that time, we were West Coast people.

[some talk about the weather in the Northwest].

Mrs. Leopold: It would interest you to know that both girls went to Germany for a while. They know German, but being married to Americans who know no German, they don't use their German, but they do still with their

father. Their children, the grandchildren, learned German songs and German verses and German games from their grandfather. Two of the granddaughters are interested in linguistics. One is a freshman at Pomona, and the other is graduating from the University of Alaska and she wants to do graduate work in linguistics.

Leopold: I didn't make efforts to proselytize, but some of them caught on.

Hakuta: I see, it must be genetic.

Leopold: Well, they talked to me, they knew what I was interested in.

[some talk about the difficulty in expense of going to graduate school].

[General context of conversation: Hakuta comments generally about how the problem of bilingualism is still neglected within the field of psychology].

Leopold: Thinking of Mrs. Hatch, I had a queer experience with her. She was quite a follower of mine, and she called one meeting at UCLA, that's where she was teaching, which was dedicated to me. So she had all the linguists assembled there that evening, and as the climax of the evening, she spoke an address about me. My hearing wasn't very good, I was wearing a hearing aid. I didn't understand anything, not a word of her address except from time to time, I heard "Professor Leopold", "Professor Leopold." To this day, I don't know what she said, but it was commendatory, I'm sure. [laughs]. A number of people at UCLA were interested in me. So they haven't completely neglected me, I think.

Hakuta: Getting back to your volumes, did you have much contact with psychologists at that time?

Leopold: No, not any, except for what I read. But no personal contacts. No, I didn't want to be a psychologist. The field of psycholinguistics hadn't been invented yet, so I wanted to be a linguist and nothing else. I knew it had ramifications towards psychology, but I rejected being a psychologist. Well, I want to show you my collection.

[They go over to the bookcase, which holds copies of his four volume diary, his edited volume with Bar-Adon, his bibliography and Slobin's edited bibliography, among others. Others I noted were books by Lois Bloom, Joshua Fishman, and Sol Saporta. Embedded in this bookshelf were several old notebooks, approximately 12cm. x 20cm. x 1cm., which were the diary notes of Hildegard and later Karla; then they go to his bedroom/study, where he takes Hakuta, piece by piece, through his publications list, neatly written on a small notebook].

[About twenty minutes of conversation was missed at this point, going through the publications list. Leopold tells Hakuta that he may bring the tape recorder into the study, which is when this recording continues].

[General context of conversation: As Hakuta brings in the tape recorder, Leopold has located an article which appeared in *Time Magazine,* January 1, 1940, p. 42. The article contains a picture of Hildegard and Karla].

Leopold: This might interest you. Hildegard and Karla. This is an article in Time Magazine, on the first of January, nineteen hundred forty, after the first volume came out. And on one page with Eleanor Roosevelt [another article on the same page has her picture].

Hakuta: This is when they were how old?

Leopold: Oh, it was taken on the shores of Lake Michigan, north of Milwaukee, and 1939, Hildegard was nine years old and Karla was three years old.

Hakuta: Two dollars and twenty five cents, that's inflation for you [noting that the article cites the publisher and price for the book].

Leopold: Oh, yes, I don't know how much it costs now. The original edition is not available now....

Hakuta: In general, are you happy with the kinds of generalizations people have made from your work?

Leopold: I remember I didn't like this write-up at the time it came out, but I look at it again now and I find it's not so bad at all, for a layman. He picked out some interesting items, of course that's the journalistic style. Another feature that I remember was, it was, 1939-40, Christmas time, we had the Modern Language meeting in New Orleans. I was there, and this number of *Time* came out just at that time, and during the meeting, several people came to me and pointed out this article on page 42. They had already examined that copy and found this article which I didn't, well, I knew it was in the works, but I didn't know it had already come out. This is quite a nice picture. My wife dug up this article, the copy that I have of it, and had it xeroxed, nowadays you can do that, and she gave one copy to Karla and she was quite interested. She wants to re-xerox it for her children.

Hakuta: It is a very nice picture.

Leopold: Yes, I just figured out, Hildegard must have been nine and Karla three.

[continues to go through bibliography items; comes to article in *Language Learning,* "Patterning in child language, 1952"].

Leopold: That's another article which had great influence. It has been reprinted a number of times.

Hakuta: Well, this was in your edited book, in your book of readings.

Leopold: Oh, that's right, we used it too there. That was interesting too, to me, how that reader came about. The younger editor was Bar-Adon, in Texas.

Hakuta: I assumed that because he was the one who commented on the more recent works, in the book.

Leopold: Yes. Well, I attended some Modern Language meeting and I was sitting at the desk at the reception desk, and people came and talked to us, and there was a young man whom I didn't know, who had just arrived from Israel. That was Bar-Adon. And he was almost touched to tears that he

met me, and had used my work in Jerusalem. And we kept in touch after that and after a few years he suggested to me that we should edit together a reader in child language. And I told him at the time the custom is when an old scholar collaborates with a young scholar in work, the old scholar gives his name, and the young scholar does most of the work. Well, he took that seriously, I think, because he has done most of the work, all the modern things, and I specialized in translating the German articles from the past. So I did my share, really, I worked on it too, but I didn't do most of the work, he did most of the work.

Hakuta: You wrote about half of the comments on that, as I remember, the introduction for the readings.

Leopold: Only to those German things that I translated.

Hakuta: All the German work was translated by you....

Leopold: That's right. He didn't make that too clear, but the introductions are signed with initials, so people can find out which I did.

Hakuta: I think that the German works are unappreciated, I guess....

Leopold: Although some of them were by German psychologists. William Preyer, the German with an English first name William, so he usually signed W. Preyer, P-R-E-Y-E-R. He was a psychologist and he wrote a two-volume work, I think, on his children's language. That's one of the most important predecessors.

Hakuta: Well there's also Stern. His work....

Leopold: Kindersprache.

Hakuta: I've read another translation of it by Arthur Blumenthal who wrote a book called "Language and Psychology" in which he translated about a full chapter of that work, and that was incredibly enlightening.

Leopold: That was the only work really more or less on the scale of my work. Preyer's and Stern's. Those were my models, really. And they were psychologists. I met Stern in 1935 in Hamburg. He was a Jew, and was banished to his home, really, when I visited him. He was not well treated at the Nazi time.

Hakuta: What year was this?

Leopold: During the Nazi period. Nineteen-thirty-one, maybe. And he received me and I had an hour with him, in his home, but he wasn't active in the university any more when I met him. He was a professor of psychology. So the psychologists are really important.

[continues going through bibliography].

[General context of conversation: They come to a citation for the re-edited version of Leopold's bibliography (by Dan Slobin), which had come up earlier in the conversation in front of the bookshelf, where Leopold mentioned that Slobin had removed Leopold's original comments on the works].

Leopold: This is called Leopold's Bibliography edited by Slobin.

Hakuta: I am surprised that he took your comments out from the revision.

Leopold: Well, he had a little committee, including Ferguson and Greenberg, who agreed with him. I suppose they agreed with everything he suggested. Just to save space, I don't know, maybe he didn't think much of my comments [laughs]. He filled the book with all sorts of other things which are useful. I see their usefulness better now than I did at the time.

[General context of conversation: End of going through the bibliography; but they are still seated in the study].

Hakuta: With your children's subsequent development, as the end of your fourth volume approached, it was really clear that English was becoming the dominant language.

Leopold: Naturally.

Hakuta: Did they maintain their German in other ways than speaking to you in German?

Leopold: To a considerable extent, although they are not fluent any more. But it's still their habitual address to me, speaking German, so they still do it. But I wouldn't say that they are experts in German. They haven't developed in that direction at all, neither one of them.

[end of conversation in the study, they move back to the living room after a break].

Leopold: Are we still recording?

Hakuta: Yes, is that all right?

Leopold: Yes, it's all right. I repeat [from earlier when recorder was not running], I've never talked so much about myself as I have today.

Hakuta: I think that there's a class problem that has associated bilingualism to negative implications in this country.

Leopold: Well, that's the old idea of the melting pot, they want immigrants to assimilate. And most immigrants want to assimilate. I was unusual in wishing to have my children speak German. The usual immigrant wants English only. They have to emphasize the English in order to make their way in this country. Well, since I was a teacher of German, I didn't have that worry so much.

Hakuta: So you're obviously convinced that learning two languages in early childhood had no negative consequences in the child's development....

Leopold: It certainly hasn't had any bad consequences on my children.

Hakuta: I'm sure that you're often asked by parents, "What is the best way to raise my child bilingually?"

Leopold: Well, I consider my way good. Talk nothing but German to them. Marguerite knew enough German that I could talk German before her and to her. She answered in English.

Hakuta: So you more or less followed that principle, one-parent one-child.

Leopold: Yes. I think that's important. It doesn't necessarily mean one parent, but one person for one language.

Hakuta: Do you think that things could have turned out differently if you had used both languages, that her English would have been much more dominant?

Leopold: You would expect to have some effect of bilingualism restricting one language in favor of another. I've had that with my daughter, Hildegard particularly, as a transitional period. But .... for a while they didn't know there were two languages involved. One was the way all Papas spoke and the other one was the way all Mamas spoke. And it took some years before it dawned on them that that wasn't the truth in the general situation.

Mrs. Leopold: When I spoke German, "Ooh, Mama, don't, it sounds terrible."

Leopold: Yes, and I remember some incident when I happened to speak English when there were other people around, you know, and my daughter wondering "oh, Father knows English too!"

Hakuta: And I guess they still feel uncomfortable using English with you.

Leopold: Well, now they do, because there isn't enough support for the German any more. They like the fact that they know some German, that they can still use it, but it doesn't really mean anything to them.

Mrs. Leopold: This may interest you. Werner has a German class, here in Panorama.

Leopold: Just for fun.

Hakuta: Are these people who already have some German?

Leopold: They're all people who have had some German in their background, either at home or in school. But not very deeply in it, and they want to revive it. That's what they do, they revive it. They've learned quite a bit in spite of the informality of the teaching. We just talk and read simple stories.

Hakuta: I think it's a terrible misconception that people have that adults can't learn new languages.

Leopold: They enjoy it. They come because they like the class.

Hakuta: What do you think is the difference between children learning a second language and adults?

Leopold: Well, the great advantage is for children to learn the second language is they get the pronunciation much better than adults. Adults are too set in their speaking ways, and they transfer those speaking ways into the foreign language. That's unavoidable, it seems to me, although people differ of course. Some adults are good learners too.

[The tape recorder is shut off for lunch; Hakuta takes a few photographs of

Leopold with his original diaries; it is very clear from the way he thumbs through the notes that he is very proud of his accomplishment. "I can still get interested in this," he remarks. After lunch, Hakuta and Leopold go for a walk around the grounds of Panorama City, Leopold in his wheelchair and Hakuta pushing him. During the walk, Leopold jokes to Hakuta that he now has the distinction of being the only person to have pushed the father of child language around in a wheelchair].

[General context of conversation: After the walk, sitting once again in the living room. Leopold gives Hakuta a bibliography, volume 3, *Linguistics,* of the Modern Language Association, which he had recently received in the mail].

[General context of conversation: Hakuta takes out of his briefcase the Stanford University library's copy of the first edition of Leopold's Bibliography to show Leopold].

Leopold: Let's see, that's the library copy? [reads] Leopold, bibliography. They ought to reproduce it before it wears out completely [its pages are falling apart]. [Leopold looks on the back cover]. Nobody has used it since spring of '83, oh, it's due in spring of '83. It's interesting to see a library copy.

Mrs. Leopold: I wonder how much money Northwestern University earned on this book.

Leopold: They were glad if they made their expenses.

Mrs. Leopold: That's what they thought in the beginning....

Leopold: Well, when they had earned their expenses, I think, they sold it to AMS Press.

Mrs. Leopold: When they were babies, [Leopold] could analyze the sounds, but when he was gone, for about two months on a tour taking a group around Germany, I stayed with Hildi a few weeks and then joined the group. So she was with her grandfather and housekeeper and they spoke German only. I don't think they were as interested in the language as in the things that she said that were a little different. So they tried to keep up the diary....

Leopold: Yes, my father's housekeeper kept a diary for me while I was gone.

Mrs. Leopold: Well, I couldn't write phonetically either.

Leopold: The diary was interesting because the housekeeper didn't know English, so she wrote down in German the way it sounded, and I recognized the English words behind them when there was a mixture.

[skipped some conversation]

Hakuta: When you spoke to each other you used English?

Leopold: I spoke to her in German, she answered in English.

Mrs. Leopold: It was a real bilingual situation.

Leopold: Yes, it was in a sense the ideal bilingual situation.

Hakuta: Before you had the child, did you speak that way to each other?

Leopold: [to Mrs. L] I think I spoke German to you before.

Mrs. Leopold: She [Hildegard] came our first year, the first year we were married. We were thirty and thirty-two, but before we were married [to WFL] you wrote to me in German.

Leopold: Yes, I think so. And you tried to answer in German and I criticized your German [laughs].

Mrs. Leopold: No, I learned a lot that way. He would take my love letters and correct them.

Leopold: That's what she wanted. And then she's still telling everybody what I did to her love letters.

Mrs. Leopold: Oh I learned. It took me fifty years to learn German [laughs]. I think that's unique. Don't tell anyone that, though.

Hakuta: Do you feel that the fact that the child was bilingual made the study less attractive to use for some people as a database? [elaborates]. Some people might say she's a different case from a normal monolingual child.

Leopold: Yes, of course many point out her father was a college professor, of course what do you expect? Well, those are prejudices.

Hakuta: I think that there is a prejudice against bilingualism, or studies of bilinguals.

Leopold: Well, that's what people say, that's a wonderful idea to teach children two languages from birth. But nobody else does it.

Mrs. Leopold: Didn't Hildegard have some French in school, and when she got to France she was able to get along too?

Leopold: I think she had a year of French in college. But she told us how relieved she felt when she got into Germany, where she could really talk.

Mrs. Leopold: This has nothing to do with bilingualism, but Werner wrotearticles that investigated the effect of the war on the food and on the customs and costumes, language, from the refugees [around Germany]. Then we went through and got words that were introduced into the German language, English words.

Leopold: Yes, I wrote several articles on English influence on the German language, post-war. And there is considerable influence. And that was reprinted by Fishman ("The decline of German dialects," in J. Fishman (Ed.), *Readings in the Sociology of Language.* The Hague: Mouton, 1972). People couldn't speak the dialect any more as they used to around themselves, you know, because the refugees didn't understand the dialect. So the dialects were reduced. It still exists, of course, but they don't play the part anymore that they used to.

Mrs. Leopold: And he wrote on the dialects in this country. He gave a couple of lectures in Germany on that.

Leopold: Yes, on one of our trips to Germany, I made arrangements to give lectures at various universities. And one of them at least dealt with American dialects, which of course compared to German dialects are not dialects at all. But there are differences, of course, and I illustrated it with records, the dialects with dialect records. "The story of the rat." Kurath who was the director of the Linguistic Atlas, and the Linguistic Atlas people know the rat story, that brings in all kinds of questionable word forms, and when it came to the mid-Western dialect to illustrate, we lived in the mid-West, my record wasn't so good, but I had my second daughter along, Karla, and so I let her read the rat story to the German students. That was the university students. And they followed eagerly but they didn't learn much, they just looked at my daughter, she was quite good looking!

Mrs. Leopold: The funny thing was that was supposed to be mid- West. She's very susceptible to dialects, and she went to Cornell University and absorbed the Eastern dialect, so when she got up instead of giving the mid-Western dialect she had the New York [upstate] dialect, she didn't sound right at all, but I don't think.... these were all young men.... I don't think they noticed anything different. They just watched her. [laugh] When the students pounded on the desks loud, she turned to me and said "Ooh, did they not like what Papa did?"

Hakuta: That's one custom that I really enjoy [pounding on the desk for applause].

Leopold: When I was a student in Germany, applause was routinely given by trampling with your feet. And then they put linoleum in the classrooms, and the trampling didn't work so well, so they substituted with pounding on the desk. And that was new to me!

Other 1989 BRG Working Papers titles:

Aída Hurtado and Gloria Cuádraz, *A Selected Bibliography on Watsonville History*. An annotated bibliography of historical and demographic documents on the city of Watsonville, California. (BRG #89-01)

Kenji Hakuta, *Language and Cognition in Bilingual Children.* Two studies with Spanish-English bilingual Puerto-Rican children are described. The first study examined the issue of cross-language transfer of skills. The results suggest a better fit with a model of transfer that is more holistic rather than of specific skills. The second study investigated translation skills in 4th and 5th grade students. The results show that bilingual children separate the two languages effectively and that they are extremely good translators. (BRG #89-02)

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Kenji Hakuta, *An Interview with Werner F. Leopold.* An interview with Werner Leopold reflecting on his life, career and the historical course of linguistics and the study of child language and bilingualism. (BRG #89-07)

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